

CLAIMS

We claim:

Sub A1 1. A method of doing business on a network comprising:

providing a user with access to a preferred online store through one or more networks, the

5 online store having one or more products each with a product description and a price, the product description and price being provided to the user;

receiving one or more selection requests for one or more of the products being selected products;

providing the user with access to one or more bid conditions for the selected product; and

10 providing the user with one or more second bids, each of the second bids originating from one or more other stores that participated in an auction, and each of the second bids conforming to the bid conditions.

2. A method, as in claim 1, where the other stores are a set of pre-registered merchants that agree to provide the second bids for the selected product at a checkout time.

15 3. A method, as in claim 1, where the bid conditions include any one or more of the following: a selected product price, a shipping method, a shipping time, a handling method, a product

packaging, a set of product delivery instructions, a provision of better deals for bundling two or more products, a recommendation of comparable and/or related products, a provision of customer service programs including express checkout in online stores, wish lists, gift registries, reward programs, discount for certain shopping groups, custom-configurable products, email notification

5 services, services, and products.

4. A method, as in claim 1, where one or more of the other stores provide additional product bids.

5. A method, as in claim 4, where the additional product bids include any one or more of the following: a replacement product, an up-sell product, a cross-sell product, a combination product to be used with the selected product, an alternative product, and a related product.

10 6. A method, as in claim 1, where one or more of the other stores can re-bid to the user after placing the bid conditions.

7. A method, as in claim 1, where one or more of the selected products is organized in a product ontology.

8. A method, as in claim 7, where the ontology specifies one or more attributes of a service.

15 9. A method, as in claim 8, where the service includes any one or more of the following: insurance, training, financing, banking, stock brokerage, real estate sales, car sales, airline tickets, real estate maintenance, professional services, legal services, business management services, medical services,

sales, travel, education, entertainment, computer programming, technical design, web page design, home maintenance, repairs, services, and products.

10. A method, as in claim 7, where the ontology specifies one or more attributes of a product.

11. A method, as in claim 10, where the attributes include any one or more of the following: the

5 product name, the product manufacturer, the product model number, one or more product identification numbers including the product UPC (Universal Product Code), the product SKU (Stock Keeping Unit) number, or ISBN in case of books, one or more categories the product belongs to, one or more components of the product and their value, one or more accessories of the product, and one or more product features.

10 12. A method, as in claim 7, where the bid conditions are presented to the user arranged in an order according to one or more of the attributes.

13. A method, as in claim 1, where the auction can be any one or more of the following: a standard auction, a parcel bidding, a Dutch auction, a reverse auction, an express auction, a private auction, and a bartering.

15 14. A method, as in claim 1, where one or more of the second bids are arranged in an order.

15. A method, as in claim 14, where the order includes any one or more of the following: one or more of the product attributes, a customer satisfaction rating, a price, a delivery, a handling option, a shipping time and cost, and existence of one or more customer programs including express

checkout in online stores, wish lists, gift registries, reward programs, discount for certain shopping groups, custom-configurable products, and email/notification services.

16. A method, as in claim 1, where one or more of the products is a complex product, the complex product comprising more than one component where the components include one or more of the following: a product and a service.

17. A method, as in claim 16, where one or more of the components is provided from a different other store and the bid is a joint bid between one or more of the other stores.

18. A method, as in claim 1, where one or more of the products includes one or more of the following: is a set of one or more of the other products and a service.

19. A method, as in claim 1, where personal information about the user is not disclosed to the other stores.